

From: Charles Johnson
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 12/10/01 6:53pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Note: I am not a lawyer, and thus do not fully understand the proposed settlement being discussed. I am merely running on the information provided me by several news outlets as to the exact terms of this agreement.

Allowing Microsoft to settle this antitrust lawsuit by giving away a mere one billion dollars in software and hardware to schools is preposterous. While I applaud their ingenuity, it reeks of the Internet Explorer undercutting all over again.

Many school districts use Apple Macintosh products to power their learning and library computers. Allowing Microsoft to simply give away their software, all over again, into a market in which Apple has traditionally been dominant is foolish and counter to the idea of punishing a monopolist. Simply allowing them access to a new market in this guise is unconscionable, especially since part of the remedy may be "paid" in software.

Microsoft sets the price for its product, and it loses nothing (not even in an opportunity cost) by giving the software away to a market that would not purchase it in the first place. However, they stand to gain substantially when the support funds run out, and the schools find themselves in the position of having to pay to maintain their free software from only a few short years before. They become locked into the cycle of upgrades, just like many corporations, and Microsoft gains a new steady revenue stream.

Explain to me again: How is this punishment, exactly?

Do not let Microsoft make any part of its settlement payment in kind, be it software or hardware. Force only cold, hard cash from them.

I implore you, let justice be served.

--Charles Johnson